



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

November 2016 Newsletter



New Teton Public Access

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has teamed up with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to secure a new parcel of private land that will provide public access on the west slope of the Teton Range. The acquisition was made possible with a generous donation from the landowner, the van Meerendonk family.

The 44-acre parcel, just south of Alta, will provide key public access to thousands of acres of contiguous public land, including Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service's

Jedediah Smith Wilderness and even Grand Teton National Park to the east.

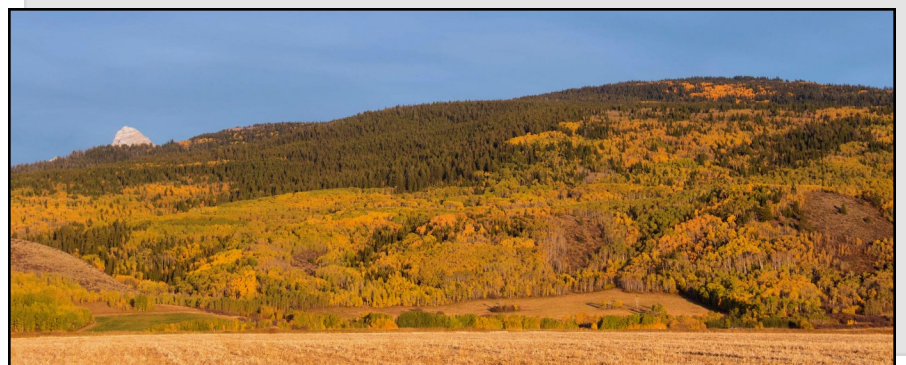
The new Coco Belle van Meerendonk Wildlife Habitat Management Area will be managed for both wildlife habitat and public access by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The Game and Fish plans to construct a parking area large enough to accommodate trucks with horse trailers.

"This acquisition was a classic example of partnership, starting with a handful of local citizens reaching out to the landowner and other entities that could make it all happen," said Brad Hovinga, Jackson Wildlife Supervisor for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. "We're always happy to be a part of projects that provide habitat and public access to Wyoming's wildlife resource."



WY Game and Fish Commissioner Charles Price thanks the partners and accepts management of the new Coco Belle WHMA at a dedication ceremony held on the property south of Alta.

Funding for the project was provided by the van Meerendonk family, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Wildlife Foundation, RMEF's Torstenson Family Endowment and Project Advisory Committee, Jackson Hole Land Trust, and other private donors.





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Jackson Habitat & Access Coordinator Derek Lemon tightens wire supports on a pipe-rail fence enclosure on the National Elk Refuge.



Contractors make stream channel improvements by widening a meander on Flat Creek and placing the fill on the inside of the curve.

Making Flat Creek Even Better

Jackson Aquatic Habitat Biologist Anna Senecal oversaw the completion of the Flat Creek channel restoration project on the National Elk Refuge this month. This project was initiated in 2012 to restore function to 3.5 miles of Flat Creek, a blue ribbon trout stream just north of the town of Jackson. The objectives of the Flat Creek National Elk Refuge Enhancement Project are to remove past in-stream structures, reduce sediment, and increase habitat for native fish. This blue ribbon trout stream, known for its trophy-class cutthroat trout (Below), has experienced a variety of alterations over the past century. Fish habitat structures were installed in the 1980s to create additional

hiding cover for trout. These structures have out-lived their life-span and are being replaced with new structures.

In addition to stream construction, two long-term monitoring sites were installed, which will be revisited on alternating years. One monitoring site is enclosed by a four-rail steel pipe fence (Left). Fence construction was completed with the help of several Jackson region personnel and members of Trout Unlimited, Teton Conservation District and the National Elk Refuge. Comparison of these two monitoring sites will show the effects of elk browsing on willow recruitment and channel stability over time.





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Hunt Season Report

The fall hunt season is a busy time for regional game wardens. Overall, compliance has been good with mostly minor violations being observed, the most common being hunters without their Elk Feedground Special Management Permit, required for all hunt areas that include elk feedgrounds.

Afton Game Warden James Hobbs had a gentleman call who had found a nice mule deer buck, which appeared to be a wounding loss. Hobbs gave the person permission to keep it and set up an appointment to meet and place an interstate game tag on the deer. The deer turned out to be a fairly notorious non-typical buck from the area (right).



North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens reports that weather systems in early October prompted movements of big game down to lower elevations making for great hunting. In general, this year's elk harvest was better than average. Many hunting parties reported good success for both elk (left) and deer, and the handful of hunters lucky enough to draw moose and sheep licenses were almost 100% successful.

Warden Stephens reports having to hand out a few citations including shooting from a roadway, over limit of waterfowl, over limit and failure to tag big game.

(Right) A red fox gets the attention of Warden Stephens' yellow lab, Gus.



South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash spent several days patrolling the Wyoming and Idaho state line, after receiving several complaints about Idaho hunters illegally hunting in Wyoming. Several horseback patrols were conducted, along with a deer decoy operation off Forest Service roads. Several of the tips provided were from other legal Idaho hunters in the area.

Also, a deer hunter reported finding a dead mountain goat (Left) in the Wolf Creek drainage of the Snake River Range. Upon investigation, Warden Lash had no reason to believe it had been shot, but rather it appeared to have fallen off a cliff and died. Lash appreciates the extra set of eyes fellow hunters provide in the field, even when things don't turn out to be poached.



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(Above) Jackson Aquatic Habitat Biologist Anna Senecal holds a hefty cutthroat. (Upper right) Jackson Fish Supervisor Rob Gipson measures a cutthroat on the Snake River.

Photos above by Jared Baeker, below and right by Nicole Johnson

Snake River Sampler

The Jackson fish crew conducted their annual fish sampling effort on the Snake River. This year, crew members conducted three passes on the section between Moose and the Wilson Bridge. While the overall numbers haven't been analyzed yet, over 1,000 fish were handled on the first day alone and there were again a number of Snake River cutthroats greater than 16 inches.



Tracking Hoback Cutthroats

Tracking of fish tagged in the Hoback River and tributaries continued. The majority of fish did not move significantly, but one fish left Dell Creek and was found in the Snake River two weeks after tagging. The downstream distance traveled was approximately 20 miles! The program is part of Adopt-A-Trout, which is a joint project with Trout Unlimited.





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Hunt Season Data Collection

South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick has been busy contacting hunters and collecting harvest information to help monitor populations. Gary, with the help of other regional personnel, reports contacting a total of 1710 hunters and members of the public at established check stations and in the field. A total of 666 hunters/publics were contacted in October alone. The crew checked a total of 127 deer, 84 elk, five moose, five black bears, one mountain goat, 11 pronghorn and six sage grouse.

Gary reports that 85 percent of the bull elk checked were five points or better on at least one antler. Ninety six percent of the bucks checked were 2+ years old, with only four percent being yearlings. Forty seven percent of the 2+ year old bucks had an antler spread of 24 inches or greater, with 30 inch bucks comprising less than five percent of the total number of adult bucks checked.

Dead Deer in Star Valley

Gary Fralick has responded to several reports of dead mule deer in the Star Valley Ranch area in Star Valley this fall. The deer had no apparent cause of death and have been taken to the Wyoming State Veterinary Lab in Laramie for analysis. Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Virus is a possible cause as deer dying of the virus have been recovered here in the recent past.



Watch Out For Game

Big game are beginning their fall migrations to winter ranges. As a result, wildlife personnel have been fielding an increased number of calls this past month of animals moving across roads and unfortunately, of wildlife-

vehicle collisions. Several mule deer, elk, and moose were hit by vehicles in October in the Jackson area. Motorist are reminded to slow down and be aware for animals near roads, especially at night, dusk, and dawn. Game and Fish works with WY Dept. of Transportation and the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation to strategically place electronic wildlife message signs in areas with high volumes of wildlife-vehicle collisions. Also, a reminder that it is illegal to remove antlers or horns from a road-killed animal before contacting a Game Warden in Wyoming.



A group of bighorn sheep forage on the roadside in the Hoback Canyon recently.



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Getting a Refuge Permit

The Jackson Game and Fish Office Managers report that one of the most common questions they've been getting lately is how to acquire a permit to hunt elk on the **National Elk Refuge**.

An opportunity to hunt elk on the National Elk Refuge (Hunt Area 77) is open to those hunters with a valid Wyoming elk license. The application process for National Elk Refuge elk hunting permits is conducted online through the Wyoming Game & Fish Department's Access Yes! program. A direct link to login and begin the permit application process is here:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/plpwFrontEnd2008/default.aspx>.

A random draw of National Elk Refuge hunting permits will be conducted each Monday of the hunt season. To disperse hunters over the hunt period, half of the alternate permits issued will be valid for Tuesday – Friday of the respective hunt period, and the remaining half will be valid for Saturday – Tuesday of the same hunt period.

Hunters must apply for an alternate permit online between Friday at 9:00 am and Sunday at 11:59 pm MST for the upcoming hunt period. Hunters will designate during the application process if they want to be considered for a Tuesday – Friday or a Saturday – Tuesday alternate permit for the upcoming hunt period. The results of the weekly computerized random draw for permits will be posted on the application web site by 11:00 am on the following Mondays:

November 21, 28, December 5 & 12

The number of permits issued will vary, depending on hunter harvest rates and participation. Individuals who were already successful in obtaining an elk permit for another hunt period may still apply for an alternate permit.

Additionally, as animals move onto the refuge and hunting activity picks up, daily field permits may be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Hunters can call a recorded message at **307-201-5437** to be notified if field permits are available. Only field permits will be issued on the Refuge Road near the 90° turn at Twin Creek. Daily field permits will give licensed hunters immediate access to the refuge hunt once their permit is signed. These permits are valid for the day of issuance only. Decisions to issue daily field permits will be based on the number of current hunters and the safe dispersal of hunters and animals. There is no guarantee these permits will be available.

These items must be in possession while hunting on the Refuge:

1. Refuge elk hunting permit
2. Valid state elk hunting license (excluding limited quota archery only)
3. Hunter Safety card if required by state law
4. Wyoming Conservation Stamp
5. Wyoming Elk Feed Ground Special Management Permit.



A permitted elk hunter is allowed one assistant to hunt with them, who is also required to wear hunter orange. The assistant must stay within 50 yards of the hunter, unless retrieving. Family members under age 18 are exempt from this rule. Hunters are limited to a maximum of seven cartridges in possession. Designated retrieval roads will be open to vehicle travel to retrieve elk from 10:00 am until dark. Elk should be dragged to the nearest retrieval road.



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New State Record

Connor Weekes, 13, of Jackson tied into this whopper Utah chub in the Snake River below Jackson Lake Dam. He was thinking it might be a state record, and he was right!

If you think you may have caught a new state record fish you can check out the complete list on the Game & Fish website here:

<https://goo.gl/OLpa18>

(Left) Jackson Fish Supervisor Rob Gipson makes official measurements on the fish. (Right) ?? Proudly displays his new state record Utah chub.



No News is Good News!

The regional Aquatic Invasive Species crew wrapped up their boat check stations for the 2016 season with a report of no aquatic invasive species detected! They also conducted sampling efforts on area lakes and rivers for aquatic invasive species. Samples were collected from Jackson and Fremont Lakes as well as the Green, New Fork, and Salt rivers. We're hoping for no news there as well!

Auburn Hatchery News

Auburn has been busy shipping and receiving Kokanee eggs this month. Auburn received approximately 305,000 eyed New Fork Kokanee eggs from the Daniel Hatchery and 986,500 green eggs from Sheep Creek, which will be reared this winter and stocked out next summer. Also, Travis Parrill restored the hatchery interpretive signs (Right) that were showing their years!

